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PREPARATION OF FOOD

In Lau there is one main meal a day which is eaten just after sundown. Left over food is eaten cold the next morning. In general, however, the Lauan eats throughout the day whatever he can find in the bush. Sometimes a morning meal is prepared and eaten between nine and eleven o'clock. Occasionally when the men are working in the village women boil a pot of manioc for them. When they are in the garden, however, the men often prepare garden produce in an earth oven for a morning meal. A man for whom communal work is done provides a small morning feast for the workers.

Most of the activities of each day are directed toward procuring enough food for the evening meal. During the greater part of the year on most islands the evening meal consists of steamed manioc, sweet potato, or breadfruit, and greens boiled in coconut cream with or without fish. If there is no fish or meat the meal is considered poor.

From one to three closely related households within the same clan or subclan form a food group. They share a kitchen hut (kitchen huts have been introduced by the colonial government) and an earth oven, and prepare and eat their food together. Cooking arrangements may be shared by a household consisting of a man, his wife, and their children and another household of a married son, his wife, and their children. Or they may be shared by a household consisting of a man, his wife, and their children and another household consisting of the man's widowed sister and her children. (See table 1 and figure 3, K14, 15 and K19, 20.) Occasionally a single household has its own kitchen hut and earth oven (table 1; figure 3, K16, K21). Boiling was formerly done in the dwelling house on the hearth.

There is a strict sex division of labor in regard to the preparation of food in Lau, and there is a general division in the type of food prepared by each sex. Usually the men cook the food they have raised, such as garden produce. While the women cook the greens and fish they have procured. The men do the major part of the cooking including all the steaming, roasting, boiling with hot stones, preparing sweet puddings, and fermenting in salt water. The women do all the boiling in pots and fermenting by burial in the ground.

Fuel for the kitchen is gathered in the bush by the adolescent girls of each food group. The bundle of wood is strapped to the back by means of native rope. The rope is looped over the shoulder and under each arm and crossed over the bundle behind.

The cooking places of men and women are separate. The women do all their cooking in kitchen huts, usually located near the sleeping houses with which they are associated. The men use the earth ovens located on the edge of the village. The location and communal use of kitchens and earth ovens in Tokalau is shown in figure 3 (table 1). Women or uncircumcized boys are

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342 A man may either select and cut the timber for his house himself, or
313 make arrangements to have it done by his own village or a related village. If he cuts it himself, he fells the first suitable timber he sees for any part of the house and leaves it until he can get help to haul it to the house site. To
[431] procure the help of a village he presents one or more whale's teeth or property such as mats and tapa to the ranking men of the village with his request. At the appointed time the necessary house posts are assigned to groups of men who select, fell, and transport them. The natives use imported metal ax blades, hafted like adzes, for felling timber. Long, heavy beams are carried on the shoulder. Hauling the timber takes two or more days, and during this time the owner provides the daily feast (*i nggaravi ni takathu ai vale*) for the workers.

342 The quantity of sennit needed for a house depends on the size of the
283 house and the amount of ornamental lashing to be executed, but for even a small house a large quantity is necessary. An industrious man on Fulanga who was building a house 3.5 fathoms long, 2 fathoms and 2 spans wide, and about 3 fathoms high, estimated that he needed 6,000 fathoms of sennit. This he made in his leisure time, mainly in the evening. To complete such a task takes from six months to one year of steady work. Well-executed ornamental
[555] lashing is very much admired by the natives and adds considerably to the owner's prestige. Frequently members of the owner's clan contribute sennit for the house.

342 After the timber has been hauled to the house site, it is shaped and smoothed (*sasau kathu*) by the owner or by the carpenter with metal bladed adzes of various sizes. Inasmuch as the Lauans take great pride in smooth, thick house posts this is slow, careful work.

When the parts of the main framework are ready to be erected, the sennit finished and the harvest ripe, the day for erecting the main framework is set by the owner and the village headman, who announces it to the village. All the able-bodied men in the village help in the actual work. The old men, giving advice and telling stories, sit in a group under a temporary coconut-
[272] leaf thatched pavilion (*vakqtu noloa*), near the house site. Properly, kava should be provided by the owner; but on islands where kava is not raised it is often omitted.

On this first day of the actual house building the largest feast of the series is held. It is provided and prepared by the owner and his relatives. The men work on the ovens, and the women fish and boil the food. The women take no part in the actual house building. A small feast (*i takitaki*) is served in the morning at nine or ten o'clock. The main feast (*mangitchi ni kali vaka vale*) is served at four or five in the afternoon. It is distributed by the old men under the direction of the chief of the ceremonial ground or the

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502 however, be the orientation of a canoe if the outrigger were on the port side, the usual position in Lau.

For further details concerning *thamakathu*, called *thamakau* in Mbauan, see Hornell (16, pp. 307-319).

Construction

396 The construction of a large sailing canoe requires planned economy on the part of the builder and his clan and the cooperative labor of his whole village. It extends over a period of several months. The builder and his clan must raise enough food to provide daily feasts for the workers and gather enough property to make the final payment to the carpenter.

396 **Canoe body.** The builder selects a tree for the hull of greenheart, *mbau*, or *makota (Dysoxylum richii)* wood. Canoes of greenheart are the strongest 313 and the most durable. The trunk must be straight, large, and sound, and it [824] must not be too far from the beach and the village. A sailor is always looking for good canoe timber and often stops on a trip through the jungle to examine a tree. Standing at the base and facing the tree, he sights up to the crown to determine the curve of the trunk and its suitability for a hull.

[412] When the tree has been marked by cutting off a piece of bark with a knife, the builder procures the services of a carpenter, usually from his own village. If he is an influential man, he makes an initial payment of property (*mbutombutó ni wangga*) to the carpenter before the work begins. Formerly a builder from another Lau island or from Tonga made an initial payment of at least two whales' teeth.

396 When sufficient food for the first series of feasts has been collected, a 313 day is set for felling the tree. Early in the morning the men of the village 483 go to fell the tree. Under supervision of the carpenter the tree is felled close [412] to the ground by means of metal-bladed adzes. Before the crown is cut out wooden rollers are shoved under the trunk. A feast prepared in a temporary earth oven in the jungle is provided by the builder and his clan at about midday. The men meet again on an appointed day to continue the work. With great effort the trunk is rolled over into the position the finished canoe is to take. Two strong saplings, about 3 meters long, are staked near the middle and athwart the trunk on the side from which it is to be rolled. The stakes are lashed to the log with *wangiri* and split *viavia* vines. Wedges of wood are then forced between the log and the stakes to make the vines taut. [824] Two *kandrangi (Smilax vitiensis)* vines are tied near the base end of the trunk and one near the head. All the men except the builder take hold of these vines and prepare to pull. The builder, grasping the roller under the base of the trunk, cries rhythmically, "Folo, folo, folo, folo! I tuo!" At the last two words the men pull, the builder raises the roller, and the trunk rolls over.

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The ends of the trunk are carefully examined, and if either shows any sign of decay it is gashed for removal.

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Sailing canoes to be used outside the reef usually measure from 8 to 12 meters long. Following a vine marker held taut at the base and head ends of the trunk, a man cuts two longitudinal lines in the bark with an adz to mark the opening of the hull. A series of short parallel lines a foot apart are cut at right angles to and joining the two longitudinal lines. The bark of the series of small triangles thus formed is removed and the trunk is leveled between the two edges of the hull. Leafy saplings are thrust into the ground near the log to shade the workers from the sun. A steamed feast is served at noon.

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The hull is roughly shaped and hollowed in the forest. The upper part of the trunk forms the stern, which is truncated with shield-shaped butt. The base forms the head or bow, which is deep and pointed. When it has been lightened sufficiently it is hauled on rollers to the beach, a very difficult process which I witnessed on Kambara. A pathway through the bush is cleared by burning the brush. Rollers of *sielavu* or other wood are spaced about 6 meters apart along the path for a distance of about 20 meters. One end of a heavy vine (*kandrangi*), about 7 meters long, is knotted to the center of a beam of *mauamaua (Homalanthus nutans)* or other wood which is inserted lengthwise into the stern end of the hull. Sticks of *tapo* are fitted and beaten in athwart the hull above the beam to hold it in place. The stern is wrapped with beaten *walaki (Flagellaria gigantea)* vines. Grasping the *kandrangi* vine, the men haul the hull over the rollers. They place it on the last two and rest while the other rollers are carried forward along the path and the hauling is resumed. When they reach the beach the hull is floated to the village, where it is finished. The hull is placed on two rollers and a temporary shelter (*yalavolau*) (p. 173) is built over it.

[824]

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When the hull is finished, the washstrakes (*sai*) are added. They are lashed to the hull with sennit drawn through a series of holes (*nggara ni vakovako*), drilled along the upper edge of the hull and the lower edges of the washstrakes. The process is called *mbau vau*. A long narrow strip (*kapikapi*) of greenheart, *mbau*, or *vaivai* is inserted between the hull and the washstrake. Under the *kapikapi* is pushed a calking of tapa, coconut fiber, canvas, or cloth. The *kapikapi* is held in place while the lashing proceeds. Starting inside the hull, a piece of sennit is threaded two or three times, out through one hole in the hull and in again through the corresponding hole in the washstrake. It is then looped through the lashing and the process is repeated two or three times depending on the size of the canoe and on the sennit. The original end of the sennit is held fast by the lashing against the hull wall. The sennit is pulled tight and carried to the next pair of holes,

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13 are low with deep indentations and mangrove thickets. The north-west end rises abruptly from the water in a 120 foot hill, which also slopes steeply on the land side.

There is one small grove of coconut palms. Lizards, snakes and hermit crabs are present. White terns numerous in addition to the usual birds.

484 The island is uninhabited, but is occasionally visited by the
161 natives of Mothe, especially for timber, there being a trail cut
313 into the interior.
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[p.26]